June 26, 2020
Issue #11

Lynda Grondlund-Naeem— On Being a Small Business Owner During the Pandemic

The Crazy Wisdom Weekly

shining a light in the dark

Published by the *Crazy Wisdom Community Journal* during the Pandemic.

The Crazy Wisdom Weekly

We welcome articles, interviews, recipes, wisdom, personal essays, breathing exercises, favorite places for socially distant walks, news of your dogs, whatever. Send your submission to Jennifer@crazywisdom.net.

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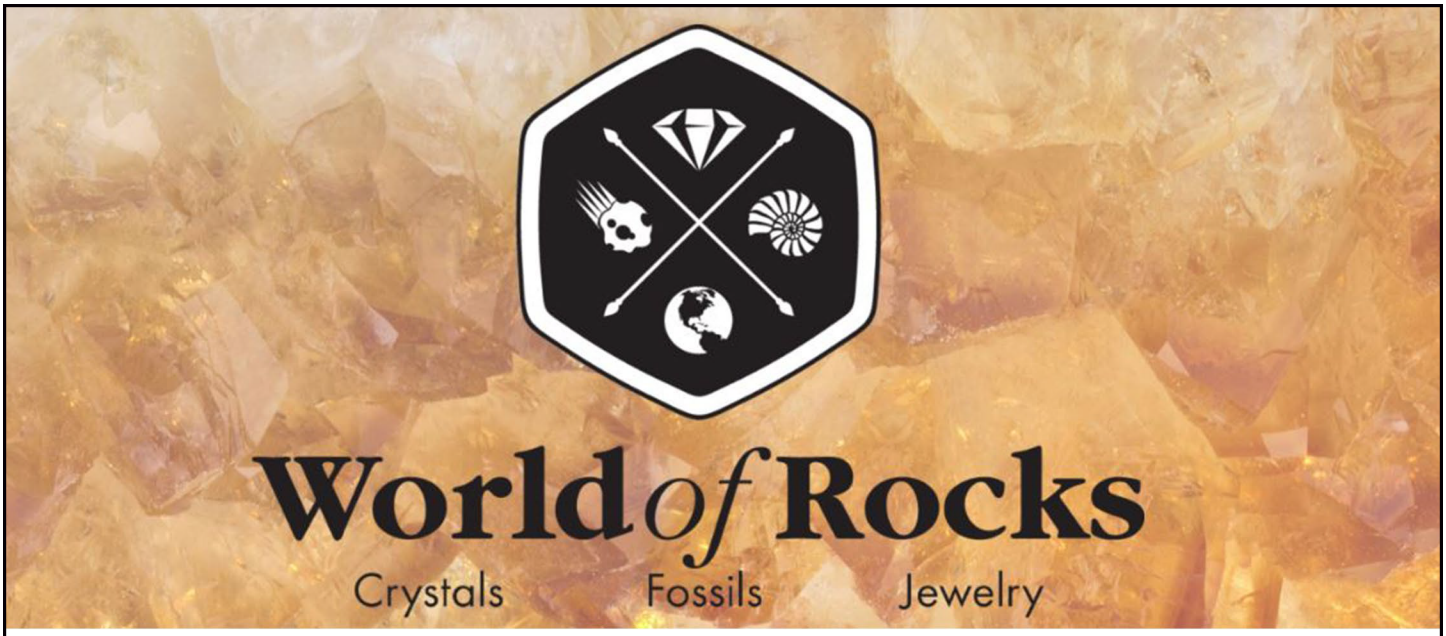

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Please read our parent publication, *The Crazy Wisdom Community Journal*. You can find online archives on our website, crazywisdomjournal.com. *The Crazy Wisdom Journal* has been published three times a year since 1995.

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Thank you to our contributors for this issue:

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Word of the Week:

Widdershins

Another way to say something is moving counter-clockwise or something is moving in the wrong direction.

Because of Covid-19, we didn't publish our usual springtime *Crazy Wisdom Community Community Journal* in mid-April. We will publish our fall issue on schedule. In the meantime, we thought we'd create a weekly online version—short, and lively, and perhaps a mild distraction for our local and regional readership. We welcome articles, interviews, recipes, wisdom, personal essays, breathing exercises, favorite places for socially distant walks, news of your dogs, whatever. Send your submission to Jennifer@crazywisdom.net.

ADAPTING TO UNCERTAINTY:

a story of small business during the pandemic

By Lynda Gronlund

As a personal trainer and karate instructor, I've always been skeptical of online training. I'm not very tech savvy. My husband usually has to update my phone and computer. I love the energy of seeing clients in person, and being able to connect with them on a human level.

In mid-February, the franchising organization for the karate school I run with my husband, PKSA Karate, called an online meeting to discuss plans if the coronavirus were to reach Michigan. The virus seemed a far away issue, an unlikely possibility. A week later another meeting confirmed that, if necessary, each school would convert to live video training as well as an on-demand program our founder had created a year prior, intending to reach students who weren't close enough to a karate school to train in person. The program hadn't proved popular and was unfinished, having only videos for beginner to intermediate students.

That week I got the first call from a parent asking for their tuition to be put on hold until the virus blew over. There were still no cases in Michigan. I started running numbers. How many families could we lose and still pay rent on our building? A personal training client requested to switch to video training, something I'd done just a few times before when a client was out of town. I started following personal training clients around the studio, wiping down each surface they touched. My husband and I met with a couple of other Master Instructors in our organization to film advanced videos for on-demand classes. I called my parents and told them I wouldn't be visiting for a while.

On March 7, our school held our quarterly belt promotion. It felt strange not to shake each student's hand. Things seemed to start moving faster at that point. Governor Whitmer ordered schools closed on March 12. Our organization had a major tournament and black belt promotion scheduled that weekend with thousands of students and families from all over the state expected to attend. It became clear mid-week we would need to cancel. I decided we would stay closed for that weekend and regroup, then reopen Monday the 16th. It was not to be. My team of instructors scrambled to get our Zoom schedules set up, communicate with families, and figure out how we could possibly give our students a good experience through a screen. We held our first week of online classes. I didn't teach much that week, leaving it to the other instructors while I scrambled with logistics and communication. There were so many moving parts and so many questions.

More families cancelled or put their accounts on hold. They couldn't get their kids to participate online, or were too stressed to figure it out. Some had lost jobs and couldn't pay tuition. These I told to go ahead and train for free for now. Some families wouldn't train online but asked us to keep charging tuition. I ran numbers obsessively, worried about paying our bills.

The families who did get online were grateful for a shred of normalcy and positivity. We got messages daily from parents thanking us. We've always prided ourselves on being a closely-knit community of families, not just a martial arts school, and one of our biggest worries was not being able to provide that camaraderie. But, in some ways, the pandemic brought us closer together. We left a few minutes at the end of each class to catch up while the kids told us what they were up to. Our instructor team met virtually with other school owners and instructors across the state and country sharing tips for teaching, scheduling, and getting Zoom to do what we wanted it to. We met everyone's pets on screen.

The personal training clients who stuck with us met with us via video chat. Almost everyone was struggling to maintain any level of motivation. We emphasized self-care and realistic expectations. I did my best to embrace those myself. I checked the statistics multiple times per day. I got irritated with my husband for going to the store too often and grilled my parents about their activities before finally, mostly, accepting uncertainty and leaving others' choices to them.

We bought new computers and upgraded the internet at the studio, which had long been an issue but never much of a priority. We learned a lot in a short period about technology and about connecting with people when we can't meet in person. As restrictions lift, we will start meeting in person, outdoors at first, with those who are willing. We expect to maintain an online element to both businesses for the foreseeable future. We're incredibly grateful that it appears we'll be two of the small businesses that survived this period of adversity, and that we can continue doing what we love to do: help improve kids' and adults' lives through martial arts and fitness. Now we even have a few more tools to help us do it.

Lynda Gronlund-Naeem owns PKSA Karate Ann Arbor, online at www.pksa.com/annarbor, and BalancePoint Fitness, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/BalancePointFitness. She also writes the What's New in the Community column for the Crazy Wisdom Community Journal*. She can be reached at balancepoint.fitness@gmail.com or 734-214-0801.*

COMFORT FOOD

Adapted by Angelas Madaras

Swiss Chard & Herb Tart

INGREDIENTS

- ½ small red onion*
- 3 celery stalks and leaves*
- 8 large chard leaves, roughly chopped, discard white stalks
- 2 garlic cloves*
- 2 tbsp torn mint leaves
- 2 tbsp chopped parsley
- 2 tsp chopped sage
- 2 tbsp olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
- 2/3 cup feta, crumbled
- 1/2 cup pecorino, finely grated

Serves 4

- 1/8 cup pine nuts, lightly toasted
- Grated zest of 1 lemon
- 1-1/4 cups all-butter puff pastry
- 1/2 cup brocciu cheese or ricotta
- 6 Courgette flowers, cut in half lengthways (optional)
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- Salt and black pepper

*Sliced thin

Place a large frying pan on medium-high heat and sauté the onion, celery, chard, garlic, mint, parsley, and sage in the olive oil. Cook, stirring continuously, for 15 minutes or until the greens are wilted and the celery has softened completely. Remove from the heat and stir in the feta, pecorino, pine nuts, lemon zest, ¼ teaspoon of salt, and a hearty grind of black pepper. Let cool.

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Roll the pastry to a 1/8" thick sheet and cut it into a circle, approximately 12" in diameter. Place on an oven tray lined with baking paper. Spread the filling out on the pastry leaving a one inch edge all the way around. Dot the filling with large chunks of broccui or ricotta top with courgette flowers. Bring the pastry up around the sides of the filling and pinch the edges together firmly to form a secure, decorative lip over the edge of the tart. Brush the pastry with egg and refrigerate for 10 minutes.

Bake the tart in the oven for 30 minutes until the pastry is golden and cooked on the base. Remove from the oven and brush with a little olive oil. Serve warm or at room temperature.

From Our Blog

Seeds for the Future—A Local Organic Seed Grower Explains the Importance of the Emerging Seed Movement

By Erica Kempter

Let's stop and envision an ideal food system. One that gives us the collective ability to feed ourselves sustainably for generations to come; one that provides healthy, safe food for all. A system where most of this food comes from local, organic farms that don't work against nature, but with it; where farmers grow crops from a wide choice of seeds that are uniquely adapted to the climate, soil, and conditions on the farm, and these seeds produce an abundance of nutritious and delicious food.

Seeds are like a miracle in a small package (unless we're talking coconuts). Often I find myself looking down, holding a small collection of seeds in my hand, and I am reminded how each one is living and breathing, just as I am. I know if I take these seeds and tuck them into the soil under the right conditions, those tiny promises will take in the earth's water, bringing about a magical series of internal metabolic changes: the beginning of new life.

I, along with my partner, Mike Levine, own Nature and Nurture, LLC, a local organic landscaping business. Recently, we launched Nature and Nurture Seeds and began selling sustainably grown, heirloom vegetable seeds. Our mission is to be a catalyst for the preservation and innovation of food seed biodiversity in the Great Lakes region.

Seeds are a plant's way of reproducing itself. During the creation of a seed, through the magic of pollination, genetic mixing occurs, making each new seed completely unique. Each seed has the potential to contain new traits that make it survive better in nature or, in the case of agriculture, that make it more beneficial for people. The more our food crops are allowed to make seed (and those seeds are subsequently replanted), the more opportunities there will be for new genetic combinations resulting in increased biodiversity.

So where did the seeds of our food crops come from? As human beings went from being hunter-gatherers to farmers, our ancestors began to grow plants intentionally, as opposed to hunting or foraging for wild food. At some point, our ancestors began collecting seeds from wild plants and sowing them upon the land. As they did this, they identified new traits and learned to save seeds from the best plants—plants that were easier to grow, produced more food, or were resistant to pests, drought, heat, cold, or flooding. Each selection changed the genetic make-up of the plants, making them better adapted to grow under the conditions in which they found themselves.

Learn more about the history of seeds, and our food future, on our blog.

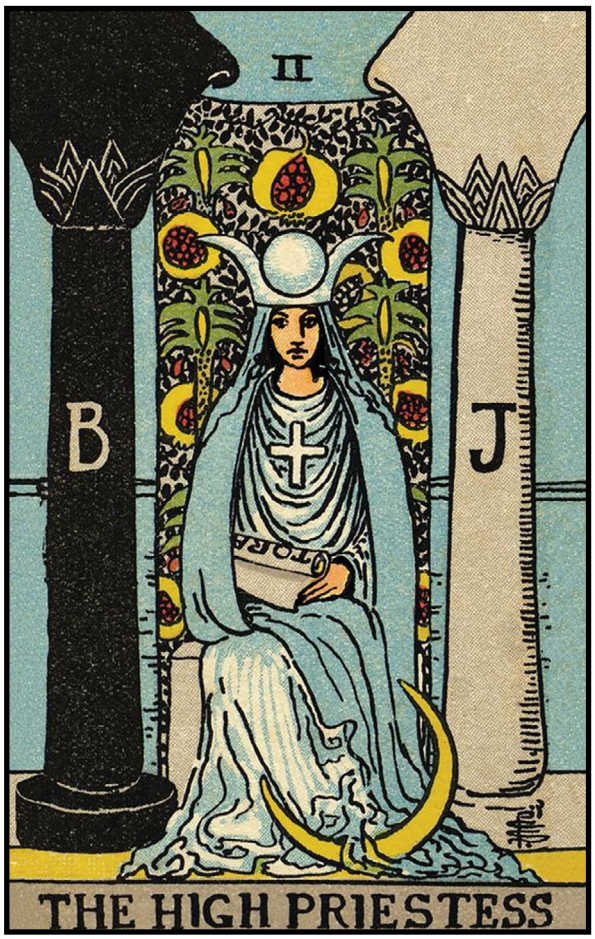
Tarot Card of the Week

By Carol Karr

The High Priestess

You've most likely encountered the High Priestess before, but in other forms—she can be seen in the archetypes of Persephone, Artemis, Isis, and many more. When you encounter her, you will see her sitting on a cubic stone between the two pillars at Solomon's Temple, Jachin, and Boaz. Jachin (right) is generally referred to as the Pillar of Establishment and Boaz (left) is the Pillar of Strength. The pillars also depict the duality of nature; masculine and feminine, good and evil, negative and positive.

The High Priestess's location between the two suggests that it is her responsibility to serve as a mediator between the depths of reality. She is the third pillar—the path between. She believes that both pillars are equal and there is knowledge to be learned in both worlds. You will also notice that she wears the crown of Isis which can mean that she is a believer of magic. The high priestess wearing of the solar cross denotes that she is connected to the seasons of the earth and the earth itself. The crescent moon at her feet is seen also in many depictions of the Virgin Mary and means that she has a complete grasp over her emotion. The pomegranates in the background refer to the ambition of the priestess.



Crazy Wisdom Book Pick of the Week

By Sarah Newland

Plant Magic: Herbalism in Real Life
by Christine Buckley

Here is an invitation to the wild world of healing plants growing right outside your door. Highlighting herbs from catnip and plantain to nettles and rosemary, this book provides the information you need to assemble an herbal arsenal for combatting any ailment—everything from brewing up a slick lube tea for sexual health to fashioning a simple summer band-aid from backyard "weeds" to crafting an herbal smoking blend to quiet a busy mind. This accessible guide covers questions like: What is plant medicine? What can I put in my mouth and where do I find it? Can I still go to my doctor? We've got you covered.

Click here to purchase a copy of *Plant Magic*.

Turning Ground For Local Food:

An interview with Argus co-owner, Kathy Sample, and Jae Gerhart, Washtenaw County Food Systems Coordinator for the MSU Extension Office.

By Angela Madaras

What are the most remarkable and positive outcomes that have come out of the fog within the local food sector as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic episode?

Jae Gerhart: Due in large part to COVID-19, public interest in purchasing from local farmers and food producers has skyrocketed. As grocery store shelves empty and more families cook from home, local farmers throughout Washtenaw County, and the state, are reporting increased sales and a significant spike in demand. For some, their sales are the highest they have ever seen.

The novel coronavirus has increased public interest in the workings of national and global food supply chains. For those of us who work in local and regional food systems, we think about the social, economic, and environmental effects of food systems all the time. In this pandemic, those effects have been magnified for everyone. At the onset of the crisis, news reports described entire fields of onions and lettuce being plowed under and milk poured down the drain, while grocery stores were struggling to stock shelves. As meat processing plants have become COVID-19 hotspots and their capacity slowed the overall beef prices have increased. Fears of food shortages and disruptions in the supply chain have caused many to question how our large food supply chains work, and why they weren't able to pivot quickly or prevent the spread of the disease in their facilities.

My hope is that this increased interest in the food system spurs reforms to some of the underlying issues we've been researching for years. For example, the consolidation of meat processing plants (four companies own 80% of the processing capacity in the United States) and other food industries is now under greater scrutiny. The working conditions of our mostly migrant and immigrant labor force within the food system is being illuminated. My hope is that a greater number of people feel empowered to engage personally and politically to create more resilient food systems.

Jae Gerhart

How do you see the local food system moving forward in a more structured, safe, and successful way for all stakeholders from growers, producers, store owners, restaurant owners, chefs/cooks, and food workers to all of the eaters and shoppers from every socioeconomic level?

Jae Gerhart: The reason we have such a robust local food system here in greater Washtenaw County is because people are willing and able to invest in, and purchase from, local farms and businesses. This kind of consumer-centered support is possible because many individuals in this county have the financial means to afford local food. Local food is typically more expensive than national or global food products. Scale of production, commitment to paying fair wages, and conservation-agriculture practices are all factors in this price difference. If the community wants a local food system that serves all its stakeholders, we need a population that can support it financially. If we want local food systems to be far-reaching and "successful," we need more consumers who are at the very least financially stable enough to afford the *real* price of food.

Ultimately, though, to build a sustainable local food system, we have to address two very important issues: we are farming on (and thus accumulating wealth on) stolen land, and our agricultural system was built on systems of slavery which

continues to depend on the exploitation of marginalized communities. These two issues, more than anything else, shape the American food system. Local food systems will never be "successful", much less sustainable, without addressing these foundational factors.

How has your job changed, and how did you find the strength to "jump into action"?

Jae Gerhart: It's my job to jump into action. MSU Extension may be my employer, but my responsibility is to the farmers, food businesses, food system stakeholders, and to the general public. In my mind, they are my bosses. Before the novel coronavirus, my job was to help farmers and food producers make more transactions in local markets and help increase the overall economic impact of local food in the county. In the current climate, my job shifted to doing everything I could to help these business owners survive the crisis. I kept an ear to the policy measures coming from the state and federal government and disseminated this information back to farmers and business owners. I worked with my MSU Extension colleagues to develop and promote information on employee care, risk-management, food safety, and strategies for pivoting online during COVID-19.

The benefit of having a Local Foods Coordinator (me) already in place during a crisis like this is that the local farmers and business owners already have an established relationship with a central coordinator who can mobilize quickly to address immediate needs. When we heard from farmers that they were not included in the first round of Small Business Administration (SBA) programs and that the Farm Service Agency (FSA) had nothing at the time to support them, we wrote letters to Congress asking for farmers to be included in the SBA loan and grant programs. When farmers were fearful that their farmers markets wouldn't open, we wrote letters to city managers educating them on the regulations and recommendations that the Michigan Farmers Market Association had assembled to keep vendors and shoppers safe. When several businesses and farmers markets opened online markets, we got together as a group to discuss platform capabilities, customer retention, and share strategies for legally processing SNAP/EBT for online shoppers. All this has proven to be successful at this point.

Kathy, Argus Farm Stop has been running since 2014. Why do you think your business was able to not only succeed, but surpass your past sales?

Kathy Sample: Argus was able to quickly become an on-line business when it became clear that this was the direction in which so many consumers were going. We had a "heads-up" because some of our regular customers asked if we could get them groceries if they needed to isolate. We thought about how we would do that and then everything went online in a big way.

We had had a "food hub" operation for small entities and restaurants to order, so we used that platform to become an online store for consumers. Being small was an advantage, but the bigger advantage was having a staff who is totally on-board with our mission of supporting small local farms. The staff was energized and committed to making sure the farmers had a place to sell all the food they had been growing for the farmer's market. So we focused, got creative, put in a lot of hours, made sure staff was safe and protected and closed one location completely to go on-line. Food sales both online and in-store were really high, but both coffee bars were closed so we had the staff to cover the shoppers; those who continued shopping in store and those who asked for no-contact pickup and delivery. We've had considerable additional expenses like renting three walk-in coolers and a delivery van. So balancing that has been a real challenge that was hard to focus on during the initial turbulence of changing our business!

What advice can you offer those who wish to begin a local food business moving forward considering climate change and possible future upheavals?

Kathy Sample: Argus is a business based on a social mission–growing the local food economy–precisely because of sustainability issues and the other effects of our industrial food system. I believe that social impact businesses will have an advantage over purely profit-motivated businesses because the people you get to work with are aligned in your mission and they have a passion for that mission. It makes all the difference to work with people who are passionate about something that works to improve our environment or community! The consumers who seek you out are also the people you like to surround yourself with. The suppliers—in our case farms and small producers of locally-grown foods—are passionate about the same things. That alignment has served us well and made it a joy even in these hard times.

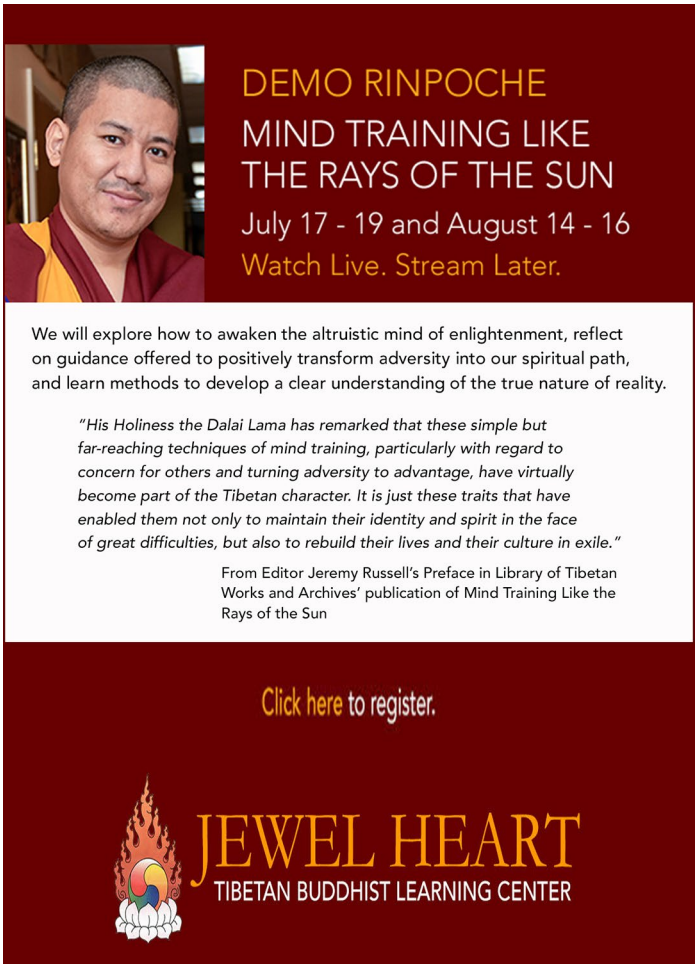
Our business model is unique–most of the profit ends up with the farms–they receive 75% of the selling price of everything they bring in (we use a consignment model, preserving the direct-from-the-farm transaction). So your business model needs to be robust. Your numbers need to make sense. Our café and coffee business help with that because a 25% margin is too low to sustain our business. We'll be happy when that café business comes back!

If you are thinking of starting a business, the mission is important all along the way. And the numbers need to make sense, too.

You can reach Jae Gerhart by email at gerhart1@msu.edu or visit her online.

You can reach Kathy by emailing kathy@argusfarmstop.com. Visit Argus online at argusfarmstop.com or call 734-846-4080.

Learn about all the places you can purchase local food on the Local Food Summit website.


DEMO RINPOCHE
MIND TRAINING LIKE
THE RAYS OF THE SUN
July 17 - 19 and August 14 - 16
Watch Live. Stream Later.
We will explore how to awaken the altruistic mind of enlightenment, reflect on guidance offered to positively transform adversity into our spiritual path, and learn methods to develop a clear understanding of the true nature of reality.
"His Holiness the Dalai Lama has remarked that these simple but far-reaching techniques of mind training, particularly with regard to concern for others and turning adversity to advantage, have virtually become part of the Tibetan character. It is just these traits that have enabled them not only to maintain their identity and spirit in the face of great difficulties, but also to rebuild their lives and their culture in exile."
From Editor Jeremy Russell's Preface in Library of Tibetan Works and Archives' publication of Mind Training Like the Rays of the Sun
Click here to register.
JEWEL HEART
TIBETAN BUDDHIST LEARNING CENTER

Artwork by Logynn Hailley. See more of her work online.

The Crazy Wisdom Weekly Calendar

Online Workshops

Camp-at-home week 2: Cold Blooded Classification • June 29 • 8 A.M. What does it mean for an animal to be cold-blooded? Do they really have cold blood? Together, we will explore the many types of cold-blooded creatures like reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates. Campers will have a virtual visit with some of our animal teachers, and learn about which species are native to Michigan and where they can be found. There will be plenty of games, crafts, and at-home challenges to practice cold-blooded survival skills and see how well you match up to these slimy, scaly animals.

Camp-at-Home is specially designed to reduce the amount of time campers spend on a screen and encourage children to spend their summer outside exploring and discovering STEM and the natural world. Getting children up, moving, and engaging in science has always been at the core of camp and continues to be an integral part of Camp-at-Home! For more information email camp@aahom-lesliesnc.org or visit their website to register.

Metaphor & the Body—an Online Writing Workshop with Julie Mariouw/Wellspring Writing Workshops • Beginning July 7 • 6:30 P.M. An 8-week online writing workshop exploring the power of metaphor in creative writing, and its intimate association with the body. For more information, visit wellspringwritingworkshops.com or email julie@wellspringwritingworkshops.com.

Write with Color—an Online Writing Workshop with Julie Mariouw/Wellspring Writing Workshops • July 9 • 6:30 P. M. Write with Color—an online writing workshop designed to help writers experience greater artistic freedom, and perfect their writing skills. For more information, visit wellspringwritingworkshops.com or email julie@wellspringwritingworkshops.com.

Get your calendar listings in by Monday morning at 10 A.M. for the next Crazy Wisdom Weekly Issue!
Send your listing in here.

Laurel Decker-Hogge
Laurelwellness.org

Photo by Evan Brockett on Unsplash